

R 111503Z FEB 09  
FM USMISSION GENEVA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7984  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS GENEVA 000121

STATE FOR OES/EGC FOR GTHOMPSON  
STATE FOR OES/ENV FOR JMATUSZAK, ASALZBERG  
STATE FOR IO/EDA FOR RWEBBER  
STATE FOR EUR/PGI FOR DTESSLER  
NAIROBI FOR USUNEP FOR JSTEWART  
EU EMBASSIES FOR EST OFFICERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ENRG](#) [SENV](#) [EIND](#) [UN](#) [ECE](#) [ECOSOC](#) [KUNR](#)

SUBJECT: UNECE Environment for Europe Process: New and Improved

REF: 08 Geneva 927

11. Summary. The UN Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) met January 20-23, for final negotiations on the reform of the Environment for Europe (EfE) Process, which is anchored by periodic Ministerial Conferences. After lengthy negotiations, the draft EfE reform was adopted and will now go to the UNECE's Commission for endorsement at a political level. The U.S. achieved all of its goals, and the 2011 EfE ministerial conference in Kazakhstan will now focus on just two themes and produce a negotiated outcome document limited to two pages. End Summary.

-----  
Reform of the Environment for Europe Ministerial  
-----

12. The UN Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) has served as the sponsor of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (EfE) since it began in 1991. Unfortunately, the preparatory process for the last two conferences had been costly and largely unproductive requiring many meetings over several years and focused exclusively on a lengthy negotiated statement. In October 2007, the EfE agreed to a U.S. proposal to conduct a substantial reform process as a prerequisite for UNECE continuing to serve as the Secretariat for the EfE Process. The EfE reform process was given a deadline of March 2009, the next meeting of the UNECE, to negotiate an outcome of the reform process.

13. The CEP met three times in 2008 to hammer out a reform. In October the CEP held a contentious round of negotiations that led the OES/ENV representative to make a clear statement to other members that the EfE Process would have move to a host organization in which the U.S. does not participate if there was no political will for a reformed preparatory process and outcome. The U.S. strongly supports a focused process and Conference which would stress implementation of agreements and which would facilitate discussions of lessons learned and best practices amongst Ministers and representatives of civil society, including the private sector. In order to achieve this, it was paramount for the U.S. to achieve a reform agreement to limit the preparatory process on a maximum of two themes and an outcome document restricted to two pages. The U.S. agreement to any kind of outcome document was a large concession to other member states. Past experience has demonstrated that the preparatory process and conference are often consumed with negotiating a long outcome statement that diverts attention from the activities associated with the chosen themes.

14. Knowing that there would not be another chance at negotiations, members were motivated to come to an agreement at the January CEP session. Not surprisingly, negotiations ultimately came down to trade-offs between the U.S. and the EU, led by the Presidency of the Czech Republic. The Czechs felt a tremendous sense of responsibility and ownership, speaking for 27 EU members and

considering EfE to be their own child (the Czechs hosted the very first EfE Ministerial conference in 1991).

¶5. The proposed reform allows for actions by interested ministers on specific subjects and/or specific subregions, but the EfE will not be a tool for launching large negotiated initiatives. The U.S. stressed the importance that action at the national level plays in building subregional and, eventually, international partnerships.

¶6. Other achievements included an enhanced role for the private sector in the preparatory process and EfE conferences, and a clear understanding that the CEP is the convener, not the coordinator of the EfE process, especially in carrying out the mid-term review of the implementation of EfE outcomes. This latter point is critical in reframing the EfE in terms of national ownership of activities and outcomes, so that member states do not expect the CEP Secretariat to initiate data collection, analysis, etc.

-----  
Comment  
-----

¶7. Some delegates had expected a change of tactic from the U.S. now that we are in a new administration. We made the point that while substance on many issues may change, the U.S. will continue to value efficient processes that are transparent and support the growth of capacity and responsibility at the national level.

¶8. The new and improved EfE process continues U.S. efforts in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the United Nations Environment Program to focus on action and implementation; it could also be a template for reforming other international fora. While there was significant pressure to have an open-ended outcome document, there was also an unspoken understanding among the members that ten to twenty page outcome documents are unwieldy, distracting and ultimately meaningless as they fill up with platitudes and wish lists.

¶9. Now comes the hard part. Process must become substance and lead to concrete achievements for the environment. The reformed preparatory process calls for the identification of themes no later than 18 months before the Conference, which is planned for sometime before the fall of 2011. This means that the discussion on possible themes, based on environmental reports, should occur at the October 2009 CEP meeting. We will encourage engagement from EUR/ACE and USAID to ensure the focus of the work coincides with the environmental priorities they are addressing in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The next EfE Conference will be held in 2011 in Kazakhstan. End Comment.

STORELLA#